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ABSTRACT

The report summarizes an evaluation of Colorado's English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA) program for 1996-97. ELPA provides partial support for programs for limited-English-proficient elementary and secondary school students for a maximum of 2 years per student. It is noted that while the number of students eligible for the ELPA program has quadrupled from 1981 to 1996, funding was reduced for the 1996-97 school year. The program served 22,255 students during that year, primarily students whose dominant language was not English. About two-thirds of participating students showed a gain in English proficiency test scores. School districts rated themselves on the effectiveness of their programs in English as a Second Language (ESL), bilingual education, tutorial and individual assistance, and other program types. Perceived areas of strength include ESL staffing, student instruction, program management, and individualized instruction. Problems encountered included funding, staffing issues, and the restrictiveness of state requirements. Major recommendations include increasing financial support to teach students English, increasing the student eligibility period, and continuing funding until the student achieves the state-recommended proficiency level. (MSE)

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OUTCOMES, STRENGTHS, AND NEEDS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ACT (ELPA) PROGRAM 1996-97

Prepared for:

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Colorado Department of Education

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OUTCOMES, STRENGTHS, AND NEEDS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ACT (ELPA) PROGRAM 1996-97

Part I: Introduction

Across the U.S., the number of students who speak languages other than English has increased by 69% over the past 10 years[1]. During this same period in Colorado, the number of students who speak languages other than English has increased by more than 105%[2]. Colorado's schools and communities are facing rapidly increasing linguistic and cultural diversity as evidenced by the 102 different languages that are spoken by Colorado students[3].

Clearly, Colorado schools are struggling to meet the increasing demands of helping students who are limited in English proficiency meet high content and performance standards. The English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA) provides partial support for programs for these students by helping to fund the ELPA program for a maximum of two years per student.

While the number of students eligible for ELPA funds has quadrupled between 1981 and 1996, ELPA funding has dropped from $2.8 million to $2.6 million during the 1996 school year. ELPA funding applies to Category A/B students whose dominant language is not English and to Category C students whose dominant language is difficult to determine or who demonstrate limited English proficiency and function below district or national norms.

Part II - Enrollment and Demographic ELPA Information

The ELPA program served a total of 22,255 students during the 1996-97 school year (based on the October, 1996 count). Exhibit A shows that by category, about three times as many Category A/B students were served than Category C students.

EXHIBIT A
ELPA Student Count for 1996-97

ELPA Category	Definition	October Count-1996
A/B	Students whose dominant language is not English	16,715
C	Students whose dominant language is difficult to determine or who demonstrate limited English proficiency and function below district or national norms).	5,540
Total		22,255

Part III: Program Effectiveness of ELPA

Gains in scores

LEP students were pre- and post-tested using the *Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey*, the *Language Assessment Scales* (LAS), and the *Idea Proficiency Test* (IPT). Scores were reported in percentiles, raw scores, and language level scores. Overall, 67% of the students who were pre-and post-tested demonstrated a gain in score[4].

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Local satisfaction

Each school district with ELPA students was asked to complete a final ELPA report containing staff ratings, opinions, and student achievement data and rate the extent to which their program was effective in ESL, bilingual, mainstream, and other types of programs. Exhibit B provides the mean ratings on a scale from 1-4 (1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, and 4=excellent) based on the effectiveness of their programs in serving LEP students.

EXHIBIT B

Self Rating by Districts on the Effectiveness of ELPA-Funded Programs

Program Type	Mean Rating (1=low, 4=high)
English as a Second Language (ESL)	3.6
Bilingual Education	3.5
Tutorial/Individual Assistance (Mainstream)	3.4
Combinations and Other	3.4

Flexibility to meet student needs

The number of program types (ESL, bilingual, tutorial, and combination) varied from district to district, but ranged from one program to all four program types. While the majority offered only one type, five school districts indicated that they served LEP students through all four.

Part IV: Areas of Strength

Increases in student achievement

Districts were asked about what they thought were the areas of strength of their ELPA program. Responses included positive comments about ESL staff, student instruction, program management, coordination between regular and ESL staff, school support, student assessment, and the individualized learning provided to LEP students through the program. According to the comments of a substantial number of survey respondents, increases in student achievement resulted from the program. The following comments from rural, suburban, and urban districts illustrate the trends:

The program has been very effective. ESL students have demonstrated individual, schoolwide, and district gains in the areas of broad English ability, concept development, verbal analogies, letter-word identification, and dictation. Results show that, on average, students in the district made between 1½ - 2+ years gain in each area. At the end of this year, several students at all grade levels were placed in the regular classroom because they can now function on an equal basis with their English-speaking counterparts.

After two years, several ESL students are beginning to show gains of 1-5 grade levels in Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) functioning, with documented carryover into the regular classroom.

High school classes allow students to meet graduation requirements in mathematics, English, and citizenship, while they learn English.

Many of our staff are bilingual so that ESL instruction and tutoring in the content areas is possible. As a result, student self-concepts have noticeably improved which has produced positive results in most areas of the curriculum.

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Collaboration of ESL staff for ESL student achievement

Almost one-third of the districts receiving ELPA funds indicated that their programs' greatest area of strength was the ESL/bilingual staff. Respondents reported that high quality ESL/bilingual staff promoted cooperation and knowledge of ESL methodologies among all staff serving LEP children, and fostered improved student achievement. A sample of the comments from respondents included: *"Teachers are cooperative and flexible allowing them to work with students on an individual basis", "Committed and experienced bilingual paraprofessionals provide quality instructional reinforcement as well as assessment", and "The very dedicated and capable tutors work with classroom teachers to implement second language learning as well as content area instruction."* Other comments included:

> *Tutors are of fine quality and are dedicated to the success of ESL students. More than half of them speak some Spanish. They are provided with monthly staff development/ networking meetings. The expertise of tutors is being utilized in buildings in both instruction and assessment.*
>
> *The cultural diversity of our ESL students add to our schools provides a richness which benefits all of the students. The professional and "linguistically different" ESL certified staff continues to be a great strength.*

Part V: Problems Encountered in ELPA

Districts receiving ELPA funds were asked to indicate special problems that they encountered in implementing ELPA programs. The problems encountered can be clustered according to **funding**, **staff/staff development**, and the **restrictiveness of state requirements**. Specific problems encountered in ELPA included: limited funds for staff, resources, and program administration; short duration of funding; lack of qualified staff; the labor intensive assessment requirements; lack of coordination with regular school staff; lack of professional development; and the October count. In regards to the October count, some staff indicated that many students come after this date (i.e., ski industry, migrant workers) causing a hardship because many eligible students have extreme educational needs for which the district receives no funds.

Part VI: Recommendations

Major Recommendations

When asked for recommendations to improve the ELPA program, most districts receiving ELPA funds indicated that the low financial support provided by ELPA and the short duration of eligibility was a problem. About 28% of the respondents commented that ELPA services should be extended from the current two years to 5-7 years and 36% expressed a desire to increase the amount of funding to support more teachers to provide more direct services to LEP students. One respondent stated: *"This year was the lowest per student funding since the Act began and does not even begin to cover the extra cost to educate an LEP student."* Analysis of the recommendations reveal the following trends:

1. Increase financial support to teach students English. Students who are not proficient in English later earn less and therefore have the potential to become an economic burden to the state in future years.
2. Increase the eligibility period for ELPA students. Research consistently shows that learning a foreign language takes at least seven years of intensive study. English is a foreign language to ELPA-eligible students.

3. Continue ELPA funding for students until such student achieves the Colorado English proficiency on adopted local and state standards.

Other recommendations by districts receiving ELPA funds:

- identify a sample of students on which to get achievement data to reduce the testing burden on all school districts;
- align the rules between CDE and the U.S. Department of Education;
- educate all certified and non-certified staff on Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) differences;
- move the ELPA count to the spring;
- provide inservices to regular classroom teachers on ESL instruction methodologies;
- continue to expand the ELPA directors/coordinators network;
- conduct a study to determine the cost to districts to provide ELPA enrollment information;
- continue to provide training on the new CDE publication: *Handbook on Planning for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Student Success*; and
- institute an Internet site to share information on a variety of LEP student issues common to Colorado districts and to give immediate feedback.

Part VII: Summary

Education for Colorado ELPA students is in crisis. With a shortage of funds and Civil Rights grievances being filed against school districts, all districts are struggling to meet the educational needs of four times as many LEP students than were served in 1981. Category A/B students, those with the most challenging need to acquire English, comprise about 2/3 of the students who are served through ELPA. As a measure of the effectiveness of the ELPA program, close to 70% of the students tested demonstrated a gain in language proficiency between pre- and post tests. District self-ratings show that overall, ELPA-funded programs such as ESL were good to excellent. Anecdotal data indicate that substantial student achievement resulted from participation in the program. Districts strongly recommended increased funding to expand services. Investing in ESL students' English proficiency will make them an economic asset to the state and to their families in the future.

Endnotes

1. Short, Deborah. (1997). Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. *ESL Standards for PreK-12 Students*. Alexandria, VA.
2. Colorado Department of Education. National Origin Project (LAU) LEP Report on Students Enrolled in Colorado Public Schools in SY 1995-96. November, 1996.
3. Colorado Department of Education. National Origin Project (LAU) LEP Report on Students Enrolled in Colorado Public Schools in SY 1995-96. November, 1996.
4. Does not include aggregate scores for the Denver Public Schools.

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS UNIT
ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY PROGRAM (ELPA)
SCHOOL YEAR 1996-1997
CONTACT: DR SIRI VONGTHIERES-303-866-6784

LANGUAGE	NUMBER	LANGUAGE	NUMBER	LANGUAGE	NUMBER
SPANISH	17941	AFRIKAANS	14	IGBO	3
VIETNAMESE	563	CREOLE	14	LAKOTA-SIOUX	3
KOREAN	474	DUTCH	14	PONAPEAN	3
RUSSIAN	454	GREEK	14	TELUGU	3
HMONG	440	SWAHILI	13	TIBETAN	3
ARABIC	225	PERSIAN	12	UZBEK*	3
NAVAJO	190	CZECH	11	ALUR	2
JAPANESE	189	SWEDISH	11	BELORUSSIAN	2
GERMAN	154	CORA	10	CEBUANO	2
CHINESE	131	DANISH	10	CHAMARRO	2
LAO	126	HEBREW	10	GUAMANIAN	2
TAGALOG	114	MALAY	10	ICELANDIC	2
KHMER	112	PAKISTANI	9	SUDANESE	2
POLISH	107	APACHE	8	YORUBA	2
PORTUGUESE	79	CROATIAN	8	ALBANIAN	1
FRENCH	69	TWI	8	BURMESE	1
SERBO-CROATIAN	48	BENGALI	7	CHUKCHI	1
FARSI	47	HUNGARIAN	7	EDO	1
THAI	46	PASHTO	7	HAWAIIAN	1
TIGRINYA	44	SOMALI	7	JAMAICAN	1
BOSNIAN	44	BULGARIAN	6	KANNADA	1
UKRANIAN	38	SERBIAN	6	KAZAHK	1
TURKISH	34	SIOUX	6	LATVIAN	1
AMHARIC	33	DARI	5	LINGALA	1
KONJOBAL	25	LITHUANIAN	5	MALAYALAM	1
HINDI	23	PANPANGAN	5	MARIND	1
PUNJABI	22	MARSHALLESE	4	PALAU	1
INDONESIAN	22	MONGOLIAN	4	ROMANIAN	1
URDU	22	OROMO	4	SWISS-GERMAN	1
GUJARATI	21	SLOVAKIAN	4	TOWA	1
SAMOAN	21	LUGANDA	4	UTE	1
ITALIAN	20	TAMIL	4	WOLOF	1
ARMENIAN	19	TONGAN	4	YAPESE	1
NEPALI	19	FINNISH	3		
NORWEGIAN	15	HAUSA	3		
	21931		271		53
			TOTAL		22255